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DELAWARE COURTS SELECTED AS PILOT SITE FOR BJA PROJECT

September 20, 2011

The Council of State Governments Justice Center through the Bureau of Justice Assistance has selected the Delaware Courts as a pilot site for their *Developing a Mental Health Court: An Interdisciplinary Curriculum* project. The program offers technical assistance in developing a curriculum for best practices for the Mental Health Courts in Delaware. The curriculum consists of eight modules that provide practitioners with basic information about mental health court program elements, design and operation considerations, and background in relevant criminal justice and behavioral health concepts.

In making the selection, the BJA noted that the commitment to the success of the Mental Health Courts in Delaware distinguished Delaware's application from the very competitive application pool which was submitted by numerous states of all sizes and jurisdictions from all regions of the country. The curriculum will be piloted in small sessions over a period of weeks in late Fall 2011 and early Winter 2012.

"The state is grateful to the Bureau of Justice Assistance for being selected to participate in its Mental Health Court Curriculum Pilot Site Program. For Delaware, this is another critical step forward in our commitment to providing community-based services for people with mental illnesses. The option for judges to order mental health treatment for some offenders rather than jail will be an important way to improve the lives of those with mental illnesses, while ensuring public safety and using the state's resources most effectively," said Rita Landgraf, secretary of the state Department of Health and Social Services."

"I have really been encouraged by the Courts understanding of the importance of treating mental health conditions. Mental Health Courts play a critical role in diverting people from incarceration to treatment and have a proven track record of success. Delaware can be very proud of the recognition by the Bureau of Justice Administration for the work that the courts have done in our state." Jim Lafferty, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association in Delaware.

"This grant is a wonderful opportunity for our State. The technical assistance our Mental Health Courts will receive will undoubtedly improve our ability to address the over-representation of individuals with mental illness. Our Mental Health Courts are excited to pilot the curriculum developed by policymakers, practitioners, and expert advisors from around the country," said The Honorable Jan Jurden, who launched and presides over the first felony level Mental Health Court in Delaware.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
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